

*Ad Majorem Resurgentis Gloriam*



Ven. August. Caracciolo Fund.  
Neap. mort. an. 1615.

**VEN. AUGUSTINE (FABRIZIO)  
CARACCIOL**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Venerable Augustine (Fabrizio) Caracciolo is one of the three Founders of the Clerics Regular Minor (Adorno Fathers). The other two are Venerable Augustine Adorno and Saint Francis Caracciolo. They founded the Order in the wake of the Council of Trent (1545-1563), and in the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation. Neither of these events, however, was the cause of the foundation of this institute or of so many others of which the 16<sup>th</sup> century is so rich.

The activities of a multitude of Saints, Founders and Reformers in the 16th century, were stimulated by the necessity to provide for the urgent material and spiritual needs of the flock of Christ - the movement for the Catholic Reform began, at least in Italy, with the Pious Unions of the faithful which inculcated the practice of virtue and benevolence. Among these Unions stands out the chain of the *Oratories of Divine Love*, which under different names and independent of one another, spread in various places in Italy at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The first Oratory was founded in Genoa by the Nobleman, Ettore Vernazza, spiritual son of Saint Catherine Fieschi-Adorno (1447-1510), a relative of our Augustine Adorno, just mentioned above. The scope of the Oratories was not only to get people to prayer (*Oratory* = a place for prayer), but also the Christian formation of its members especially in the charity toward the neediest, most abandoned and incurable members of society. Thus hospitals were founded in Genoa (1499), in Rome (1512), in Naples (1517), in Florence and Brescia (1520). Near these hospitals, to sustain them financially and morally, there lived an *Oratory of Divine Love*. In the hospitals of the incurables and in the Oratories of Divine Love were formed almost all the principal Catholic Reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the Founders of the new Orders and Congregations: St. Cajetan of Thiene, St. Jerome Emiliani, St. Camillus DeLellis, St. John Leonardi, the first Jesuits, the first Cappucins, the first Oratorians, and the first Clerics Regular Minor, zealous workers in the Oratory of the *White Robes of Mercy* in Naples.

In the historical panorama of the official church, mundane and incapable of reforming itself, these generous souls stand out as brilliant lights of charity and holiness of life. Some were called by the Holy Spirit to reform the clergy, others to educate the youth, others to propagate the faith in Mission lands, and others to assist the infirm and the incurables in hospitals.

Augustine Adorno, Augustine (Fabrizio) Caracciolo and Francis Caracciolo did not choose to establish an Order dedicated to the works of mercy, so zealously practiced by them at the Oratory of Naples; they were inspired, instead, to promote the rebirth of the spiritual life among the faithful by means of the Liturgy: the Eucharist, the Sacraments, and the preaching of the Word of God.

In the 15th and 16th centuries, before the Tridentine Reform, the Liturgy had undergone deterioration in form and in spirit. The rites, infected by the philosophical and theological tendencies of a decadent Scholasticism, changed from place to place. Their meaning was unknown to the faithful. The ceremonies were executed with excessive formalism or with irreverent hurry. The sacramental life, especially for what pertained to the Mass, the Real

Presence of Christ in the tabernacle, the confession of sins, had been reduced, almost everywhere, to the annual observance of the *Easter duties*. The preaching of the Word of God was left very often to the lower clergy, poorly educated and ill equipped to open up the treasure of the Scriptures for the nourishment of the faithful. The higher educated clergy enjoyed the rents of their benefices, but often delegated their obligations to the less fortunate. Those who did preach loved to treat of subjects in vogue, peripheral to the Gospel message.

The historical circumstances of the times influenced the scope and the activity of the new Religious family. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, our Founders showed their particular charism by rules compiled by them and by their exemplary lives:

*“...they placed, at the center of the life of the new Order, the Eucharist as the fountain and summit of sanctification and of the apostolate. This centrality of the Paschal Mystery of Christ...is expressed in a faithful and worthy celebration of the liturgical actions, especially the Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and by means of the Eucharistic Adoration and the preaching of the Word of God”* (Constitutions, 1, 5 ).

Augustine (Fabrizio) Caracciolo in particular, before his Religious Life, was a man of his time, part of that 16<sup>th</sup> century clericalism. From his family he had inherited several benefices and, in all likelihood, he appointed, as was customary at the time, members of the lower clergy to take care of them. It was rather normal for a man of his means to leave someone in charge, while he would enjoy the social connections and the amenities of the city of Naples. By 1586, however, he was a changed man, already associated with the Oratory of the *Bianchi* and the nearby hospital of the *Incurables*. Here he had begun a process of reform, beginning with himself. Aware of the ambitions, the titles and the worldliness of so many of his colleagues, he chose a simple way of life for himself by practicing prayer and works of charity. The Fourth Vow, *non ambiendi*, which was to become one of the distinctive marks of the future Order, was a strong conviction nurtured in Fabrizio much earlier, and later defended by him against Church authorities.

I am happy to present this booklet to our confreres, especially the young clerics who do not have very much to read in English about our beloved Founder, Augustine Caracciolo. It is a small contribution, which must be added to the other two publications: *St. Francis Caracciolo* (1992) and *Augustine Adorno* (2000). Together, they provide a basis for further critical studies on our Founders. For my part, I tried to respond to the wish of the 58<sup>th</sup> General Chapter (1988), which encouraged everyone toward “an accurate and documented knowledge of the history of our Order”.

Rev. Nicholas Capetola, CRM  
Goose Creek, South Carolina  
Summer 2011

## THE MAN

The Caracciolo family is perhaps the greatest and most prolific family of the city of Naples. From it originate other noble families such as the Carafa of Naples, the Ludovisi of Bologna and the Di Napoli of Sicily. Its history in Naples dates back to the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century. Some historians give to the Caracciolos a legendary origin - a descent from Homeric heroes, or the Flavian race, or the Aurelian nobility. Others trace their origin from the name of Catacolo or Caraolo of Bisantium in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The sure origin, however, starts with Theodore Caracciolo of Naples in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. For the most part the members of this family distinguished themselves for their loyalty to the rulers of Naples and to the Church.<sup>1</sup>

According to A.B. Frassoni, this family, through the centuries, has boasted of more than 800 fiefs with 32 titles of Prince, 56 titles of Duke, 42 titles of Marquis, 34 titles of Count and hundreds of titles of Baronships and Lordships. They number in their ranks one Saint (St. Francis Caracciolo), many Venerables, 10 Cardinals, 60 Archbishops and Bishops, Superior Generals of religious Orders, 24 Viceroy of reigns and provinces, 30 Ambassadors, 70 Generals and Admirals, 3 Great Masters of the Order of Malta and St. Gregory, 2 Marshalls of France, many lawyers, writers, philosophers, artists and statesmen.<sup>2</sup>

Because of their large numbers and wanting to distinguish themselves from one another, they used many names, and about 50 Coat of Arms and 60 different mottos. Through the centuries, some abandoned their names, assumed other surnames, and started other noble families, such as the above mentioned Carafa. Minor families gave themselves new genealogies which made them descendants of nobler ones (for example, Francesco Caracciolo *Nepos* calls his uncle Francis a descendant of the Dukes of Martina of the Swiss Caracciolo or *Pisquizi*, thus connecting him with the Dukes of Brienza, while in reality he is more connected with the Lords of Celenza).<sup>3</sup>

In the 15th century there arose violent internal strives between one branch and another vying for preeminence, and some members of the family, such as Sergianni Caracciolo, great Sinescalch of Giovanna II, were assassinated. After the death of Sergianni though (1437), there was a reaffirmation of the unity of the family under the leadership of his brother, Marino *Scappuccino*, from whom descended three generations later, Fabrizio, now known as Augustine Caracciolo and, from a collateral lineage, Ascanio, now known as St. Francis Caracciolo, both Founders of the Clerics Regular Minor.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol II, under *Caracciolo*

<sup>2</sup> *La Gente e La Famiglia di San Francesco Caracciolo*, Poliglotta Vaticana, 1943, Page 21

<sup>3</sup> *Vita del Ven. Padre Francesco Caracciolo*, Ms. 1629, now typewritten and available in CRM Archives, Rome.

Historians have transmitted to us that Fabrizio was a cousin of St. Francis Caracciolo - not the Caracciolos of Abruzzo Citra, but those of Marsicovetere in the province of Potenza in Lucania. Reconstructing a family tree, we can trace the common origin to their great, great grand-father, the above mentioned Marino Caracciolo *Scappuccino*. In the first part of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Marino was Governor of Bari under Giovanna II (1414 - 1435). He had acquired 37 fiefs in Abruzzo Citra alone and several others in Campania, Lucania and Puglie. Among those possessions were those of Santobuono, Schiavi, Orta, Sant'Angelo, Celenza, Villa Santamaria, Carunchio, Torrebruna, Brienza, and Marsicovetere.

In regard to Marsicovetere, it was given as a fief to the Caracciolo family by the Angevin King in 1498. The actual recipient was Giovanni Caracciolo, who added to his titles also that of "Prince of Marsicovetere". Fabrizio is a direct descendant of this family while St. Francis Caracciolo descends more directly from the lineage of the Lords of Celenza.

## Family Tree

*[Some members of the Family in direct line with our Founders: Fabrizio and Ascanio Caracciolo]*

VIII to XI Century

Teodore Caracciolo  
Pietro Caracciolo  
Landolfo Caracciolo

XII Century

Giovanni Caracciolo  
Landolfo Caracciolo (1110 - 1138), married to Anna Caetani  
Filippo Caracciolo (c. 1132) - Cadet branch - *Caracciolo Rossi*  
Landolfo Caracciolo  
Pietro Caracciolo (c. 1170) - Constable in Naples

XIII Century

Marino Caracciolo (1218 - 1254) - Knight at the service of Frederick II (1220 - 1250)  
Bartolomeo Caracciolo - Cadet branch - The Caracciolo of Pisciotta who called themselves *del Leone* or *Pisquizi* (popularly *Svizzeri*)  
Berardello Caracciolo  
Giovanni Caracciolo

XIV Century

Berardo Caracciolo - Majordomo of King Robert of Naples (1309 - 1343). In 1336 became Lord of Donza near Sessa  
Petraccone Caracciolo (1343 - 1382) - Grand Sinescalch of Giovanna I (1343 - 1382)  
Berardo Caracciolo - his son, Marino *Scappuccino*, reunited the Family after violent internal strifes

Marino Caracciolo *Scappuccino* was one of the first Barons of the Kingdom of Naples  
As Governor of Bari, under Giovanna II (1414 - 1435), he had dominion over 37 fiefs in Abruzzo Citra alone, others in Campania, Molise, Basilicata and Puglie. "Over all these lands he had *mero and misto imperio* (power to judge and to punish) with faculty to divide them among his children and relatives, except for the ecclesiastical benefices. From him originated:

The Princes of Marsico Vetere (1498)

Giovanni

First Cousin

Second Cousin

**Fabrizio Caracciolo**

Third Cousin

**Founder of the CRM.**

The Lords of Celenza

Sergianni Caracciolo  
*Caracciolo del Sole*

Lord of Celenza, Carunchio, Torrebruna, Villa e S. Giovanni Lupione  
Giulio Cesare, married to Lucrezia Carafa

The Dukes of Martina (Brienza) and Others...

Jacopo (nephew of Marino)

Ferrante Caracciolo, married to Isabella Baratucci  
Cadet branch of the Lords of Celenza, *Caracciolo del Leone*  
Giulio, **Ascanio**, Antonio and two girls  
**Ascanio (Saint Francis Caracciolo)**  
**Founder of the CRM.**

Fabrizio was born in Naples in 1555 and baptized in the same city. Although little is known of his youth, historians describe him as a young man endowed with a docile and calm character as well as open to the ideals and the demands of the Gospel. He attended the University of Naples. Obtained degrees in both secular and ecclesiastical Law and specialized in the field of Moral Theology.<sup>4</sup> He was already a rich man at his ordination and he could have pursued a lucrative career with his degrees and resources, but he loved to be a priest. After his ordination, he was given another title, the *ecclesiastical benefice* in his family fief at Cannito in Marsico Vetere in Lucania.<sup>5</sup> From there he would often return to the city of Naples in search of deeper spiritual nourishment and priestly fellowship. In so doing, he was following the example of so many high and low ranking clergymen who, in the climate of the Tridentine Reform, would often go to hospitals to serve the poor and the sick. In Naples, Fabrizio associated himself with the *Compagnia dei Bianchi*, their *Oratory* and the nearby *Hospital of the Incurables*.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Ignazio Vives, *Vita Del Venerabile Francesco Caracciolo*, Naples, 1684, Chapter VI, Page 36; also Francisco Garcia de Palacios, *Athaeneum Minor*, Ms. 1720, Chapter 3.

<sup>5</sup> The first mention of Marsico Vetere in an official document goes back to 1188, when a certain Bartolomeo, Lord of the town, bequeathed the church of St. Mary and its benefices to the Abbot Falcone of S. Stefano di Marsico. In the following centuries the town passed through the domains of the Norman, Swabian and Angevan Kings and was part of the Juspatronato of Basilicata. In 1498 Marsico Vetere and its benefices were given as a fief to the Caracciolo family whose leader at the time, Giovanni, added to his titles also that of "Prince of Marsicovetere".

<sup>6</sup> "Assai gloriosa e' la storia della Compagnia dei Bianchi della Giustizia. L'origine di essa si deve a S. Giacomo della Marca nel 1430 nella chiesa della SS. Trinita' dei PP. Riformati, che era ove ora e' il palazzo del Comando Generale presso la Reggia. A cagione delle guerre che travagliavano il regno nel 1443 la congregazione si estinse.

Nel 1519 fu ripristinata per opera di: Ettore Vernazza, mercante Genovese, P. Callisto da Piacenza, Canonico Lateranese, e Gianpietro Carafa, che poi fu Papa Paolo IV, nel convento di S. Pietro ad Aram. Nel 1524 per cura di Stefano Cattaneo e Suardino Suardi, governatori dell'Ospedale degli Incurabili, la Congrega si trasferì nel cortile del detto ospedale ove si trova, e i fratelli donarono agli Incurabili quaranta moggi di terra, posta nel Gaudio, tra Giugliano ed Aversa.

Fu qui fondato il bellissimo Oratorio col titolo di *S. Maria Succurre Miseris*, con diverse sale, ed i fratelli nel 1566 si sottrassero dalla giurisdizione dell'Ospedale. Da principio la Compagnia era di ecclesiastici e di laici, e nel 1579 crebbe talmente il numero dei fratelli, tra i quali fu lo stesso vecere' Giovanni Zunica che Filippo II re di Spagna temette poter essere la Congrega fomento di congiura contro la corona, ed il 3 Aprile 1583 per mezzo del vicere' Pietro Girone duca d'Ossuna ordino' che ne fossero esclusi i secolari. Rimasero così a farne parte i soli ecclesiastici.

Sul principio vi si ascrivevano socii quasi da tutti gli Ordini Religiosi, ma poascia ne rimase il privilegio ai soli PP. Teatini, ai Chierici Regolari Minori, a quelli dell'Oratorio, ed ai Gesuiti, sei per ciascuno di quest'Ordini...

Le principali opere della Compagnia erano confortare i condannati a morte ed assisterli nell'agonia, questuare per i poveri ed infermi, visitare i carcerati, le convertite e provvedere a molte altre opere di carita'.

Rimasta la compagnia nel secolo XVII a solo uso dei Sacerdoti raggardevoli per nascita, per meriti e dignita', e de' venerandi Religiosi non e' a dire con quanto zelo e decoro essi gareggiavano nelle apostoliche fatiche e nell'assistenza dei condannati, ed in altre opere di pietà ed di misericordia con molto profitto delle anime. La chiesa della Congrega fu decorata con grande eleganza e semplicità, con sceltissimi marmi, con stalli di legno artisticamente intagliati e con pregevoli freschi e pitture. La statua della Vergine sull'altare e' del Merliano; i freschi della volta sono del Benasca, quelli della cona del Balducci.

La bella sala attigua, ove convengono i fratelli, e' tutta dipinta dal De Matteis. Importante e' ancora l'Archivio di detta Congrega, ove in diversi Volumi sono raccolte non solo carte che riguardano la Compagnia, specialmente delle sue proprietà, privilegi e obblighi, ma documenti che si riferiscono a' diversi giustiziati.

Il Catalogo di quest'Archivio e' stato compilato dal confratello Canonico D. Francesco Sorrentino, assai competente in lavori di questo genere, ed ancora l'elenco de' moltissimi ritratti che sono nelle diverse sale insieme ad altri artistici cimeli.

La stanza al piano superiore, già abitata da S. Francesco Caracciolo, fu mutata in Oratorio intitolato al Santo medesimo. Sulla porta del primo ingresso leggesi questa epigrafe:

D. MDLXXXVIII DIE 1. JULII B. FRANCISCUS CARACCIOLI AC P. AUGUSTINUS ADORNO CLERICORUM REGULARIUM MINORUM FUNDATORES NEC NON SOCIETATIS HUJUS OPTIMERITI SODALES A SIXTO V PONTIFICE MAXIMO, JAM ADPROBATA RELIGIONE, HUC REDIT, AB URBE HOSPITATI ATQUE AD HANC NOSTRAM BEATAE MARIAE VIRGINIS ARAM CORAM ARCHIEPISCOPI NEAPOLITANI VICARIO, SOLEMNIA VOTA NUNCUPATA, IN CUBICULIS ISTIS MORAM DUXERUNT, DONEC AD MISERICORDIAE PAROCHIALEM ECCLESIAM TRANSIERUNT, UTI SCRIPTIS SODALITATIS HUJUSCE DOCUMENTIS, EXARATUM EST. CONSOLIDALES ERGO JUSTO OBSEQUII MONUMENTO IMAGINES AD GLORIAM, SCRIPTUM AD NOTITIAM MARMOREM AD PERENNITATEM APPONERE DECREVERUNT DIE X MDCCCLXXIII

(*Excerpts from an academic discourse by P. Gioacchino Taglialatela, Oratorian, on the occasion of the 3rd Centenary of St. Francis Caracciolo, Naples, June 3, 1908*).

## THE FOUNDER

It was in the *Hospital of the Incurables* that Fabrizio met Augustine Adorno, a nobleman from the city of Genoa and a newly ordained priest (ordained in the Cathedral of Naples, chapel of Santa Restituta, September 19, 1587). Soon they became friends and Adorno revealed what had been in his mind for sometime: his wanting to establish a new Congregation in the Church. He then invited Fabrizio to join him in the undertaking.

*“Fabrizio, says D. Fiumara, did not reject the invitation. Somehow his good qualities and his inclination to piety could not exclude the challenge. Nevertheless, considering the difficulties, the consequences and the expectations for such a project, he said that he needed time to think and pray over it. He did not make a decision for sometime, but they kept talking about the project. Finally, convinced by the good manners and the insistence of his good friend and, after having both prayed together, he decided to entrust himself into the hands of Adorno. He joined him with great determination, even if he thought to be unworthy and incapable for such an undertaking”.*<sup>7</sup>

They started to share ideas and to exchange notes. One of these notes ended by mistake into the hands of a young man named Ascanio Caracciolo, who was also in Naples, studying for the priesthood and a regular visitor at the *Hospital of the Incurables*. Because of the note, Fabrizio had occasion to talk to Ascanio about the new Order that he and Adorno were planning. Ascanio *“answered yes as if joking, but after eight days he met Fabrizio in one of the streets of Naples, and, noticing him wearing a poor habit and with such a holy composure, was so moved by this that he went home immediately, changed his elegant attire and came to join the two of them”*.<sup>8</sup>

This is how our three noblemen met, how they came to know each other, their past and ideals.

Fabrizio had been a priest with various *beneficij* for several years. He had been part of that 16<sup>th</sup> century clericalism very often mundane and incapable of reforming itself. He was well aware of the intellectual and spiritual poverty of most of the clergymen of his time and he understood that reform was needed. Accordingly, he began with the renewal of himself. That was the reason he came and stayed in Naples so often. Aware of the ambitions, the titles and the worldliness of so many of his colleagues, he chose a simple way of life for himself, and joined in the work of the *Compagnia dei Bianchi* - the Confraternity of the White Robes of Mercy - and spent much time in prayer at their Oratory and in the nearby *Ospedale degli Incurabili* where he found so many sick, abandoned and the so called *incurables*.

Adorno instead came to the priesthood from another route. He had studied to be a diplomat, and in behalf of the city of Genoa, he had spent several years of his life in the Court of King Philip II in Spain. While there, he also engaged in financial enterprises, lending and investments for

<sup>7</sup> Cf. D. Fiumara, *Il Primo Mezzo Secolo dei CRM*, Ms, 1639, now typewritten, Book I, Chapter 2, in CRM Archives, Rome.

<sup>8</sup> Testimony of Fr. Alfonso Latillo and Bro. Michael Amendola, as found in *Vita del Ven. P. Francesco Caracciolo*, Ms., 1629, by Francesco Caracciolo, *Nepos*, Chapter 3, Page 2 (*Italics added*).

himself and his family. In some of these investments he lost a good part of his patrimony, which caused him to stop and reflect. What at first looked like a loss proved to be the beginning of a deeper spiritual life, which led him first to the study of theology, then to priestly ordination and finally to the founding of a new religious Order in the Church.

As for Ascanio, his story was totally different. His vocation could be traced to sickness which struck him suddenly and from which he had been cured miraculously a few years before. In fact, his coming to Naples to study theology and prepare himself for the priesthood, was to keep a promise he had made to God - that if he got well, he would give his life totally to the service of the Church. God heard his prayer, and Ascanio kept his promise.

In order to firm their union and because of the importance of the matter at hand, these three noblemen decided to climb the mountain of Camaldoli to pray, to discuss and to write down the project which was in their minds. *"In this, they imitated the Savior, who in mountains and in solitude often treated and established some of the principal mysteries of our holy faith"*<sup>9</sup>

The complex of the Camaldoli Hermitage in Naples arises on an enchanting and gentle mountain about 1500 feet above sea level. Today as in the past the beauty of the place and its particular atmosphere, where silence and contemplation are interrupted only by the gentle murmur of the wind and the solemn tolling of the bells, attract numerous visitors and pilgrims. The mountain which became identified with Camaldoli in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century because of the spiritual sons of St. Romuald who came to live there, was already well known from ancient times to the Neapolitans for the simple, yet noble church of the Most Holy Savior, which was built in 493. As centuries passed, the weather took its toll, and the negligence of men provoked such damages that the church became dangerous. In 1585 it was demolished and a new edifice took its place.<sup>10</sup>

At the beginning of 1588, our three men climbed the mountain to the new hermitage and asked to be admitted and to live with the monks. After ascertaining their intention and purpose, the Abbot gave them three separate cells. They were to participate in all the exercises, austerities and vigils of the monks and then attend to their own particular project. Thus, after celebrating Mass, the recitation of the Divine Office, and private prayers in which they implored God for the happy outcome of their undertaking, they would walk down a long and spacious road leading from the church to a high wooden cross erected by the monks in that place. Here under this *Cross of Life*, they proposed and discussed *Rules* for the new Institute.<sup>11</sup>

Prominent in their minds were the teachings of the Council of Trent about the reform of the clergy and the renewal of the sacramental life of the church. The picture of the true cleric, described by the Council, corresponded well with the ideals they had in mind:

<sup>9</sup> Domenico Fiumara, *Il Primo Mezzo Secolo dei CRM*, 1639, Ms and Typewritten, in CRM Archives, Rome, Chapter II, Page 1

<sup>10</sup> A. Crocco, *L'Eremo di Camaldoli*, Edizione Teresia, Naples, 1984, Page 2

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Ignazio De Vives, *Vita del Ven. Padre Francesco Caracciolo*, Naples, 1684, Page 48

*“Nothing instructs the faithful to true piety and reverence for the Almighty more than the daily life and example of those called and dedicated to the sacred priesthood. As they are seen to have been raised to a sublime estate above the things of this world, so all eyes will be trained upon them as upon a mirror and take from them a pattern to be imitated. Therefore, the clerics who are called to the service of God must show such a life and behavior that their habit, their actions, their walking, their words and anything else about them reveal seriously, moderation and fulness of religion. They must reject anything which is even least sinful and inspire veneration in all their actions”* (Session XXII, *De Reformatione*, Chapter I).

They talked about some notes which Adorno had jotted down in Vallombrosa, while on his way to Naples, and which he had already shown to his friend, Cardinal Domenico Pinelli, in Rome. They talked about Religious Orders, old and new, and what they liked in them. They agreed that in their new community there should be ample room for prayer and contemplation. The Divine Office was to have first priority; two meditation a day; the *around the clock prayer* before the Blessed Sacrament with all the members taking turns during the day and when possible even during the night. The same rotation would apply to penances. The two Caracciolos in particular felt that a *fourth vow* should be included, which would discourage members of the Institute from *seeking ecclesiastical honors and titles*.

After these days of intensive prayer and fruitful work, they descended the mountain, and, although they continued to live separately, on agreed days and hours they found themselves together very often in the *Oratory of the Bianchi*. They also consulted Don Basilio Pignatelli, Adorno's spiritual director, and Father Mario D'Andrea, a Jesuit at the *Collegium Maximum*, to *review the New Rules*. Meanwhile, they applied these rules to themselves and they started to talk to other companions who promised to join them as soon as the Supreme Pontiff would give permission to unite into a new congregation.

For this purpose it was determined that some of them should go to Rome. Knowing that the approval of a new religious congregation would be difficult to obtain, they agreed that Augustine Adorno should go to Rome since he had *many connections* there, and that Ascanio should accompany him. Fabrizio would remain in Naples to take the necessary steps so that they would have a church in which to congregate. It was early in the year 1588 when Augustine Adorno and Ascanio Caracciolo left Naples on their way to Rome. They carried with them a *modest booklet*, an outline of the project they had in mind and for which they would seek approval.<sup>12</sup> As soon as they got to Rome, they paid a visit to Cardinal Pinelli, who made arrangement for them to see the Pope.

The Pope liked our two men. *He gave them all his attention and was pleased to listen to what they had to say*. He reminded the petitioners, however, that *to establish New Orders was a serious, hard and difficult undertaking*. He was not opposed, but directed them to follow

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Declaration* by Adorno, August 20, 1588. The *modest booklet* could well be the *Constitutiones Primae* handwritten by Adorno himself and still kept in our Archives in Rome. Our D. Fiumara also reports the *Constitutiones* in his manuscript (1639) and says that they were *stizzate* by Adorno. The two manuscripts are exactly the same.

Church protocol so that there could be a *mature deliberation*. After the meeting, the case was given to a committee of four Cardinals: Santori, Lancellotto, Giustiniani and Castagna. The mood of the Cardinals was not in favor of approving new Religious Orders in the Church. Besides, they felt that the Rule was *much too rigorous*. They suggested some adjustments, but for the time being they would not do anything else, nor make any recommendation to the Pope. They directed our Founders to experiment this *Rule* on themselves first and then come back to Rome and to reopen the case.<sup>13</sup>

Back in Naples, they soon realized that it would be difficult to grow without an official approval and a place to call their own. They met very often at the *Oratory of the White Robes of Mercy*, but in secret as it were. Fabrizio, who was trying to exchange his *benefice* in Marsico Vetere for St. Mary Major, could not go public with the initiative for fear of antagonizing the Neapolitan chancery, which would be reluctant to let go of one of the most important churches in Naples; Ascanio himself was finding opposition from members of his family who did not want him to enter religious life. A cousin of his, Giulio Cesare Mariconda, Bishop of Trivento and close friend of Pope Sixtus V, had even written a letter discouraging Ascanio from pursuing his plans. The Bishop, of course, could use his influence to block the approval of the Institute. As a consequence, it was decided that Adorno go back to Rome alone this time and that the name of the Caracciolas be not even mentioned until a Brief had been obtained from the Pope.<sup>14</sup>

In Rome, Adorno employed all his energies, used all the *connections* until the grace was granted. At some point, he was introduced to Cardinal Alessandro Peretti, or Montalto as he was often called, the nephew and closest advisor to the Pope in those days. Through the mediation of Montalto, the Pope reversed the apparent refusal of the four Cardinals. Pope Sixtus, strong and decisive with unworthy religious, inflexible with those who broke the law of the State, was willing to listen and inclined to favor signs of renewal in the church. He would let the appropriate channels review, but he was ready, if necessary, to decide and act, even by himself. This was one of those cases. Confronted with the unfavorable consensus from the Congregation of Cardinals, Sixtus V took the new Religious Order under his immediate protection by giving to it, of his own authority, the approval and the name of Clerics Regular Minor.<sup>15</sup>

The Bull of approval, *Sacrae Religionis*, issued on July 1, 1588, in its introduction, expresses knowledge of and gratitude to Adorno and his companions and their sons for their efforts in

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. F. Caracciolo, *Nepos, Vita del Padre Francesco Caracciolo*, Chapter V, Page 3 and 4; also *Memorie* of Fabrizio Caracciolo, Ms., 1605, Page 3, CRM Archives, Rome.

<sup>14</sup> Fabrizio Caracciolo, *Memorie*, Ibidem Page 4

<sup>15</sup> Much has been written about the name of 'Minor' and one still wonders whether the Pope imposed the name on the new Congregation. Actually, Adorno asked for this himself when he says in the initial petition "si supplica Sua Santita' che egli dia perche' si desidera ricevere, et nome, et institutione da Sua Santita". Fiumara even adds that the Pope asked Adorno, "What name to give to the new Institute?" Adorno, we are told, left it to the Pope to choose a name, and the Pope, who still loved to belong to the Friars Minor of St. Francis of Assisi, answered that the new Institute will "bear our name also, the Clerics Regular Minor". As for the approval of the Order, cf. also, Mario Vanti, M.I., *San Camillo De Lellis*, Roma, Edizione Coletti, 1964.

the propagation of Religion, and for their desire to grow in holiness, so much needed, the Pope says in his time when the Church finds herself to fight the Princes and Powers of darkness. The Pope quotes almost verbatim from the *Petition* by Adorno, when he says, “...these men moved by divine inspiration have already lived together as a congregation of clerics regular for many years for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls”. The Bull thus consecrates the concepts which are at the base of the new Congregation: continuous prayer, hard mortification of the flesh, recitation of the Divine Office *alla Romana*, and exercises of other spiritual works. Augustine Adorno was appointed Superior and would govern until the election *for life* of a new Superior by a General Chapter.<sup>16</sup>

Words cannot express the surprise and the joy the Apostolic Brief caused when it was read in Naples. It was hard to believe that the approval had been granted, when the new Congregation did not even have a place where to meet. Even Don Basilio Pignatelli, who later became Bishop of Aquila, was amazed and called the audience as well as the approval of the new Order *miraculous*. Adorno, Fabrizio and Ascanio, for their part, in gratitude to the Pontiff, ordered that the new Institute remember always the name of Sixtus V, and that prayers be said for his soul perpetually by all the members in all the houses of the new Congregation.

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The Bull responds to a petition presented in behalf of Augustine Adorno and his Associates. The associates are not mentioned by name in the Bull for reasons already explained, but Father Adorno was to write a memorandum, on August 20, 1588, in which he makes clear who his associates were in the foundation of the Order, among these of course were the two Caracciolas: Fabrizio and Ascanio. Here is the text of the memorandum:

Ego Joannes Augustinus Adornus Sacerdos Januensis praesenti Chirographo tamquam publico instrumento stipulato et jurato cum omnibus solemnitatibus declaro, qualiter ex longo ab hinc tempore pertractaverim cum aliquibus sociis tam Januae, quam Neapoli pro Domino Dei obsequio, in salutem animarum nostrarum et proximi Religiosum novum Ordinem praesbyterorum instituere, quotiescumque placuisse Pontificis Sanctitati.

Idcirco Romam me contuli tam nomine proprio, quam dictorum meorum sociorum, et supplici libello porrecto Domino Nostro Sixto V ad rite comprobandum dictum Religiosum Ordinem, et Domino Deo favente impetrata fuit approbatio eiusdem, addito nomine Clericorum Regularium Minorum, ut constat ex Brevi sub data die prima Julii huius praesenti anni 1588, cui habeatur ratio.

In quo Brevi, inter caeteras facultates mihi et cuilibet meorum sociorum concessas adest, ut quilibet nostrum statim possit, quando ei libuerit, emittere coram quocumque Praesule Professionem. Et quia in dicto Brevi, justis de causis in eo dictorum meorum sociorum nomine silentio involuto, ad quorum postulationem una mecum conjunctim petita et obtenta fuit dicta gratia, ideo ad omnem bonum finem, et ut clarioris veritas pateat, ad laudem et obsequium Dei Domini Nostri declaro, quod inter alios meos socios, qui non sunt aliter expressi et nominati, Januae est Dominus Vincentius Justinianus, Junensis, et Dominus Joannes Baptista Fabia, Savonensis; et Neapoli DD. Fabritius et Ascanius Caraccioli, Scipio Vollarus, Neapolitani, Marsilius Merola, Salernitanus, et Petrus Bacchedano, Hispanus, et alii socii a me dicto Joanne Augustino declarandi, et Januae a dictis Dominis Vincentio, et Joanne Baptista, et Neapoli a dictis DD. Fabritio et Ascanio Caracciolis. Et in fidem veritatis praesentem declarationem feci, scriptam et subscriptam mea propria manu, signatamque meo consueto sigillo.

Neapoli die 20 Augusti 1588. (Signature)

## THE ABBOT

The intention of obtaining the ancient church of St. Mary Major in Naples as the first house of the new Institute of the Clerics Regular Minor was well rooted in the heart of our first fathers, even before they went to Rome to seek approval for the Order. While in Rome, Father Adorno had obtained a Brief from Pope Sixtus which would facilitate the negotiations and the agreements that were to be made with the officials in Naples.<sup>17</sup>

Thus on March 17, 1589, Fabrizio Caracciolo made a deal and signed over to Decio Capace the title of his *benefice*<sup>18</sup> in Marsico Vetere in exchange for the abbey of St. Mary Major in Naples. Fabrizio was well aware that he still had to deal with the hebdomedarians (Canons), the friars of the Holy Savior (who ordinarily conducted the services), and the coadjutors (the employees). Besides these, he also had to convince the Chancery Office of Naples and the Archbishop himself.

Our historian, Domenico Fiumara, says that it was not difficult to get the priests to agree on the new congregation taking over the church. Knowing how zealous Fabrizio and his companions were, the priests were convinced that the new congregation would soon bring back to the church much religious fervor and, perhaps, even physical restoration after many years of benign neglect. The Chancery, however, would not hear of this arrangement at all. They sent word that the Archbishop, Annibale Di Capua, who was away as Papal Nuncio to Poland at the time, had to be informed of all the ramifications of this deal, and that nothing should be done without his *benepacitum*.

Having reached this impasse and wanting to turn their attention to other matters for the future of the Order, Adorno and Ascanio decided to make their religious profession in the Oratory of the *Bianchi*. The day was set for April 9, 1589, and the man asked to preside at the ceremony was Flaminio Torcelli, the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Naples. During that ceremony, John Augustine Adorno shortened his name to Augustine and Ascanio Caracciolo changed his in Francis. This is how we will call them from this point forward. Fabrizio, who

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<sup>17</sup> There is no agreement among historians as to when Fabrizio became Abbot of St. Mary Major. The majority of them follow Vives and Piselli and present him as Abbot of the Church even before he met Adorno, while others such as Fiumara and Villafranca, give the date of March 17, 1589 when Fabrizio signed the *permutazione del suo Beneficato* of Marsico Vetere to Decio Capace for the Abbey of St. Mary Major. Here is what Fabrizio himself says in his 'Memorie': "Havuto si detto Breve (*Sacrae Religionis*, July 1, 1588), si hebbe mira, che dovendosi cominciare in Napoli, si havesse havuto un luogo buono, et fra molti che se ne considerarono, fu tenuto per miglior dell'altri la Chiesa di Santa Maria Maggiore, et perciò s'uso' ogni diligenza per haversi, et trovandosi molte difficolta', se risolve' che il detto Fabrizio Caracciolo, che teneva altri beneficij, vedesse di cambiarla, che con essere di essa Abbate, sarebbe stato meno difficile il superarle; lo che eseguitosi con molta prestezza, in fine s'appuntarono, et stipularono le cautele con buoni partiti fatti alli preti secolari che vi erano, da detto Abbate".

<sup>18</sup> *Benefice*: In Canon Law, a position in the Church that has attached to it a source of income... The occupant of a benefice receives its revenues (temporalities) for the performance of stipulated duties (spiritualities) for example, the celebration of the Mass, the Sacraments, etc... Benefices are normally bestowed for life and Canon Law forbids a plurality of benefices, but Papal dispensations have made many exceptions to this rule, especially during the Middle Ages (Cf. *The Columbia Encyclopedia*). That the benefice of Fabrizio in Marsico Vetere was also an abbey is not clear. What is known is that since 1188 the Church of Santa Maria and its benefices in Marsico Vetere were donated by the Lord of the town, Bartolomeo, to the Abbot of Santo Stefano di Marsico. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Marsico Vetere was given as a fief (1498) to the Caracciolo Family by the Angevan Kings. This bequest included both lay and *clerical* lands. At the time we are talking about, Fabrizio was the actual inheritor of this clerical benefice, including the Abbey of *Santo Stefano di Marsico*.

was present at the profession, did not take the vows himself at this time. Since he was treating the matter of the use and the rights over the church of St. Mary Major, he would rather resolve this matter first. Besides, the salaries and the benefits that came to him as abbot, could be used, as they actually were for several years, to help the Order get underway in Naples and elsewhere. Therefore, by common agreement, it was decided that his profession be delayed until the situation changed, and with the provision that in the future Fabrizio would retain the place of seniority in the community. Following the profession, Augustine and Francis left for Spain on April 17, 1589, while Fabrizio remained behind in Naples to continue pursuing the matter of St. Mary Major and to take care of a group of candidates interested in joining the new Institute.

On May 30, 1589, Fabrizio signed another agreement with the Canons of the church by allowing them to retain the benefits while the Order would assume all responsibilities for the Masses left in perpetuity, conducting services at the church, maintaining the building, and taking care of any other obligation attached to the church.<sup>19</sup> The agreement was signed on the part of the Clerics Regular Minor by Fabrizio Caracciolo and Giustino Barnaba, a friend of long standing and a member of the Theatines.<sup>20</sup>

As for the Archbishop, who objected to the taking of his church away from diocesan priests and giving it to *Regulars*, Fabrizio decided to appeal to higher authority. He wrote to Cardinal Cajetan in Rome, who in turn wrote to Archbishop Di Capua in Warsaw. On June 29, 1589, Di Capua wrote back to the Cardinal and to the Chancery in Naples reversing himself and ordering his Vicar to proceed with the granting of the church. The changed tone of his words are reflected in a letter to Fabrizio. Here are some excerpts:

*Most Illustrious and Reverend Lord Most Honored  
Fabrizio Caracciolo*

*Only two days ago, I received your letter of April 15<sup>th</sup>, in which you gave news of your resolution to serve the Lord God in the newly established Religion of the Clerics Regular Minor approved by the kindness of His Holiness, and in which you requested my consent on your desire to have the church of St. Mary Major. Let me say that I had some difficulty with this concession...St. Mary is a Collegial Church and one of the principal parishes in Naples; it has many foundations and benefits attached to it and is one of the oldest and most distinguished monuments of the city. But because of your kind explanation, and because of the mediation of His Eminence Cardinal Cajetan, I have instructed Monsignor Vicar to proceed*

<sup>19</sup> From the standpoint of equity the agreement was lopsided against the Clerics Regular Minor, and if they only knew the many problems that were still to come, "they would have been better off", says Fiumara, "had they looked for another place, bought it, and built it outright: it would have taken less time and aggravations".

<sup>20</sup> The participation of Father Barnaba in the signing of this document was necessitated by the fact that Adorno and Francis were in Spain. As for the binding effect of the agreement, the Archdiocese had every reason not to take it seriously: Fabrizio was not a legitimate member of the new Order (he had not professed as we know), and Barnaba was a member of another religious Institute. In writing to Archbishop Di Capua on April 15, 1589, Fabrizio could only say that "he had resolved to serve the Lord in the Congregation of the Clerics Regular Minor."

*with the concession of the church without prejudice to the foundations there established for its priests, and without detriment to the jurisdiction of the Ordinary to which I cannot add or detract. Make use of a lawyer and a theologian, and proceed to resolve the matter without waiting for any further instruction from me. Trusting that my representatives will satisfy fully what you have asked, and assuring you of my readiness to be of service to you always...remember me in your prayer, and may the Lord God grant you His grace and prosper you in His service. (Signed) Annibale Di Capua, June 29, 1589*

Pressure had worked. The matter had been resolved, at least for the time being. More obstacles and contradictions were to arise, especially in regard to the *jurisdiction* of the Ordinary. Thus the actual transfer was delayed and then postponed. For several months the matter stood at a standstill.

That winter Fabrizio went to Rome. He sought another Brief from the Pope concerning St. Mary Major and permission for eight men to profess the vows without finishing the year of probation. He was able to obtain both. This was happy news for Fabrizio and his companion.<sup>21</sup>

Immediately they sent notice to Spain to inform Adorno and Francis and then hurried back to Naples to break the good news to everyone waiting there. The joy, however, was short lived. Fabrizio could not transfer to St. Mary Major with the candidates, because the Archbishop had certain reservations about Fabrizio, who was not a *professed* member of the congregation yet.

In this state of affairs and because of the need to provide for the candidates, Fabrizio set out to find another suitable place for his followers. There was a little church outside the door of St. Gennaro in the village of the *virgins*, dedicated to our Lady of Mercy, commonly known to Neapolitans as the *Misericordiella*. This was a hospice for poor, sick priests. There was also attached to it a rural parish where some religious activities took place. This could be the place for the time being. Fabrizio, who had friends and connections everywhere in the city, obtained the church in a rather short time from a *nobile compagnia*. Thus, toward the end of May, 1590, he moved with the candidates to the new place.<sup>22</sup>

When Adorno and Francis returned from Spain, on June 6, 1590, several novices were formally received into the Order at the *Misericordiella*: Antonio Franco, Benedetto Garcia, Ignazio Lamberto, Nicolo' Corrado and sometime later, Alfonso Manco - men, we can assume, who enjoyed Fabrizio's friendship and confidence. Franco and Garcia made their profession on September 16, 1590 in the little church of the *Misericordiella* and in virtue of the Brief mentioned above. More importantly, Francis Caracciolo said his first Mass also at the little

<sup>21</sup> The companion was Benedetto Garcia, who seems to have been also the favorite companion of the other two Founders, as it becomes evident from a reading of the correspondence between Adorno and Francis. On this occasion, it would seem, the famous episode narrated by Piselli (Chapter VIII, Page 43) must have taken place. It's very likely that Fabrizio had asked the Saintly Philip whether he was doing a good thing in asking the Pope about the Professions of his eight men - among whom was our Garcia. Philip found out right away. He asked Fabrizio "can I trust this man?" When he was told he could, he slapped Garcia on his face, and Garcia stood there smiling as if showing the other cheek. Philip gave approval to Fabrizio and praised the virtue of Garcia with the memorable words, "Cosi' ti voglio".

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Fabrizio Caracciolo, *Memorie*, Page 8.

church in 1590 soon after his return from Spain.<sup>23</sup> From there Francis started to frequent St. Mary Major, where people sought him as a good confessor. By the middle of February 1591, he had succeeded in introducing his religious family to the church. The official entering date, however, was Monday of Holy Week, April 8, 1591 when Father Adorno returned from Rome with new Briefs from Pope Gregory XIV. Finally they had a church of their own!<sup>24</sup>

With great zeal for souls, they won over people to their side every day. With joyful spirit, they thanked God with and through Mary, because they now had a place much more appropriate for the religious exercises of their Institute, and what they valued more, a church entitled to the Mother of God, who would nurture and guide their young family into the future.

Few they were, but full of zeal, grateful to the Lord and united among themselves. Like a river which, contained for a long time, floods the whole countryside when released, so were these first Clerics Regular Minor when given a place from which to operate and serve the people of God. The choral singing of the psalms, the solemn exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, the Forty Hours devotions, the preaching of the Word of God, counseling, confessions, rosary and other religious practices made the new congregation the talk of the town as it attracted many souls looking for solid spiritual direction and nourishment. This was *the new wine in the new wineskins* of the Gospel, the breath of fresh air which the spirit of God usually bestows on Founders of new religious Orders.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Early biographers of St. Francis do not mention the date of his ordination, nor venture beyond what Piselli says: "He went to Naples, and was ordained there". Augustine Cencelli, who wrote a popular life of Francis Caracciolo on the occasion of the process of Francis beatification, proposes the date of 1587 logically, that is, when Francis reached the age of 24. The date was accepted by all the ancient and modern biographers of the Saint, even by A. B. Frassoni, *La Gente e La Famiglia di San Francesco Caracciolo*, published by Poliglotta Vaticana and reliable in many other respects. Apparently they were not aware of a letter of Francis himself to Adorno on October 27, 1590, where Francis himself reveals of being a new priest ordained short of six months who has not yet obtained the faculties to hear confessions.

<sup>24</sup> The controversy over St. Mary Major continued throughout the tenure of Archbishop Di Capua and beyond. Fabrizio at one point was accused of doing unauthorized renovation in the church and was called to Rome to defend himself. He was able, however, to frustrate all these maneuvers in Naples as well as in Rome. Besides, Popes Innocent IX (1591) and Clement VIII (1592) both confirmed Fabrizio as the abbot and the Clerics Regular Minor as the legitimate administrators of St. Mary Major.

<sup>25</sup> *Passim*, Domenico Fiumara, *Il Primo Mezzo Secolo dei CRM*. Ms. 1639

## THE RELIGIOUS

Once the community had settled in St. Mary Major, life became a holy competition for them as they strove to build the kingdom of God in themselves and among the people. It was in this church that Father Adorno spent the last few months of his life, here that Francis trained the first novices of the Order, and here also that Fabrizio, as Abbot of the church, found the financial means to sustain the young congregation.

Adorno died in St. Mary Major on September 29 1591 at the age of 40. He had spent only a few sporadic months with his religious community. He died not only as the first founding father of the Clerics Regular Minor, but also as the first member of the Institute to go to his glory - as one would certainly expect of a man of such a holy and fruitful life. Because of his early death, he left the things of the Institute outlined but incomplete. He was the architect who designed the building, but left the actual building of it to someone else. He simply did not have time to instill in his followers those ideas which were written down at Camaldoli. For this work the Lord had called Francis and Fabrizio.

Francis became Master of novices as soon as he was ordained a priest and following his return from Spain. From the very beginning, he was *teacher and example*<sup>26</sup> to the first generation of Clerics Regular Minor. Under his guidance they grew, they matured and in time they professed the vows:

Benedetto Garcia and Antonio Franco on September 16, 1590

Alfonso Manco and Andrea Albertini on March 9, 1593

Joseph Imparato on March 10, 1593

Stefano Sirleto on March 11, 1593

Lorenzo D'Aponte, Pomponio Perfetto and others on July 4, 1593

To Fabrizio instead fell the responsibility of providing the material resources as well as the legitimate reassurance for the survival of the Order in those early days. While Adorno was still in Rome (winter of 1590), Fabrizio was busy in finding a home for the Order near St. Mary Major, in selecting the furnishings, and in passing his *juspatronato* to Francis for the daily needs of the community. After Adorno died, Fabrizio became the man who would travel to Rome for the affairs of the Order. As already noted, he was able to obtain briefs for the confirmation of the Order from Pope Innocent IX and Pope Clement VIII.<sup>27</sup>

While still abbot of St. Mary Major, says Piselli, "he was like the angel in the Book of Revelation, who had one foot on earth and the other in the sea (Rev. 10:2): he lived with the members of the Order, practiced the same rules, wore the same habit, shared the same

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Letter of St. Francis Caracciolo to Alfonso Manco* written from Agnone just before he died and reported by C.Piselli in his *Nitizia Historica*, Page 95.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Eight Letters* in our Archives in Rome (5 written by Adorno and 3 by Francis Caracciolo, during Adorno's Roman sojourn). From these letters, one comes away with the impression that Adorno wrote to Francis about the formation of the candidates, but to Fabrizio about matters of legality and the practical every day living.

responsibilities, and, at the same time, defended the Institute from detractors and sustained it in all its needs with his rich patrimony".<sup>28</sup>

Even though he had not officially taken the vows of the Order, Fabrizio was present at the first General Chapter of the Order which took place in March 1593, and participated fully in all its deliberations. When Francis Caracciolo refused to take the office of Father General *for life* as prescribed by the Papal Brief *Sacrae Religionis*, Fabrizio was chosen by the assembled fathers to go to Rome and, in the name of the Order, seek a change of the Rule. His opinion was valued and respected by all. No one did anything without his input and approval.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, we come to the year 1596 - eight years since the Order had been approved. Fabrizio had not yet made his religious profession, because he wanted to make sure that the church of St. Mary Major would pass to the Clerics Regular Minor. Of late, though, the controversy and the oppositions to his takeover of St. Mary Major had practically ceased. Archbishop Di Capua had died and a new one, Cardinal Archbishop Idelfonso Gesualdo, had been installed. Seeing now that the Institute did not have any further need for him to remain a *secular* priest, Fabrizio resolved to cut himself completely from the world and to consecrate himself to God with vows.

After renouncing all his personal and family possessions, he made his Solemn Profession on the feast of St. Bartholomew the Apostle, August 25, 1596, in St. Mary Major, during a Mass presided over by Archbishop Gesualdo and in the presence of many prelates, dignitaries and lay people. It was on this occasion that Fabrizio changed his name to Augustine in memory and in appreciation to his first father and companion in the Institute, Father Augustine Adorno. Augustine is the name by which we will call him from this point forward.<sup>30</sup>

Augustine, the professed religious of the Clerics Regular Minor, was not much different from what he had been from the very beginning, except that he now lived his religious vocation in a more intensive way. Freed from some of the external activities, which were now shared by the Order, he gave himself totally to the study and practice of perfection while thanking God, who in His infinite mercy, had called him to the religious life. He remembered gratefully, with tears in his eyes and emotion in his voice, the person of Father Adorno, who had been the instrument of his vocation and whose name he was now proud to bear.

Of all the virtues that he practiced, the most fundamental was the virtue of humility. On various occasions and in different Chapters, whenever his name was brought up for the office of Superior General, for which he was well qualified, since he had been the first companion of Father Adorno and because of his many accomplishments in behalf of the Order, Augustine

<sup>28</sup> C. Piselli, *Notizia Historica*, 1710, Chapter XXXIV, Page 126

<sup>29</sup> D. Fiumara, *Il Primo Mezzo Secolo dei CRM.*, Book II, Chapter 1.

<sup>30</sup> Historians have August 15, 1596, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as the day for Fabrizio's solemn profession, even Fiumara, his contemporary, who probably was present at the ceremony. The date, however, would seem to be inaccurate, if we follow the manuscript of Fabrizio himself, who recalls the event for us and adds several details, including that it was on the feast of St. Bartholomew, August 25. Cf. *Memorie*, in CRM. General Archives, Rome, Page 14.

always dissuaded his colleagues from considering him for that supreme office. In obedience, he accepted other lower responsibilities throughout his life (such as Superior of St. Mary Major, or Vicar General for the Houses in Italy while the Father General was in Spain), but throughout his mandate he always behaved as if he was the last person in the house by washing dishes, cleaning floors and attending to all the needs of the sick. In public hospitals he was often seen embracing the most repugnant patients and transporting them from one bed to another. He would do for charity what nature often abhors.

Not less was his charity toward the dying. He would stay entire nights to help them with pious exhortations and prayers imploring God for the forgiveness of sin and the eternal reward. He was so zealous in this regard that whenever he was called to assist someone, he would rush immediately and run so fast that any one who did not know him would wonder as to what was happening. For him instead this was necessitated by the spiritual need of the person, regardless of what the world would think. Therefore, when it came to the spiritual welfare of his neighbor, he would spare no effort while overlooking his own physical well being, as the following case illustrates.

Having Father Ambrosio Sauri become ill with a nervous breakdown in Rome, he was advised by doctors for a change of air and was sent to Torre del Greco near Naples to regain his strength, but there he got worse. Consequently, Father Augustine decided to bring him back to Naples, a wish expressed also by Father Sauri, to die in St. Mary Major. Thus, having put him in a portable chair and having assigned two strong men to carry him back, he himself decided to accompany the sick priest and remain at his side for eight miles to comfort him and assist him in case he got worse. Along the way, he became extremely tired and was even ridiculed by the populace for that kind of charity. But he was mindful of what the Apostle says *caritas omnia sustinet*- charity puts up with everything.

Toward the poor he showed great compassion. For them he spent a large part of his patrimony while he was still in the world. When he became a religious, he renounced everything to his family and often went begging for those in need. At times he gave his undergarments to the poor, thus showing his love for God, and knowing how He identifies with the least of this world.

This love of God was so rooted in him that he continuously practiced the exercise of the presence of God, reflected in his external modesty and not missed by those around him. He did not seem to think of anything else but God. The most important time of his daily life was prayer. Besides the hours prescribed by the Rule, he would always find time for personal, private prayer, sometimes during the night.

He was zealous to see that the rules of his Institute be observed by the members, and respected also by those outside the Order. He particularly objected to anybody, even high ranking prelates of the Church, who would interfere with the Order's Fourth Vow. The story is told of Cardinal Giustiniani who was trying to make Father Benedetto Giustiniani, one of our religious and a relative of the Cardinal, Bishop of Alissia in Corsica. When this came to the ears of our Father

Augustine, who happened to be in Rome at the time, he did not hesitate to go as high as Pope Paul V. He reminded the Pope of his word to Francis Caracciolo sometime earlier, on the occasion of Father Sirleto's tragic death, that he would not dispense our religious members from the vow. He also respectfully pointed out how such an election would create another bad precedence for the Order. He was successful in removing Father Benedetto's name for consideration. This zeal also applied when it came to his own person. Another Cardinal, in fact, told him that he would make a good Bishop, and that this would be good for the Church. Augustine response was prompt and resolute: "*Your Honor, please, do not try, if you don't want to be disappointed by my refusal*".

To confirm what he had said, he prostrated himself before a crucifix and renewed his vow of never seeking or accepting ecclesiastical dignities - the vow which he had made to God and which he intended to keep.<sup>31</sup>

Unfortunately, he was not so successful in blocking the election to the Episcopacy of Father Antonio Franco, probably because he was not in Rome when it happened. Franco, because of a disagreement with the then Superior General, Father Andrea Albertini, decided to leave the Order and became the Bishop of Ravello on the Amalfi coast. The Order suffered greatly over this breach of the Fourth Vow. After a few years, however, Bishop Franco became ill, so ill in fact that he longed to see, before he died, his fellow religious of St. Mary Major. For this mission of reconciliation, the community sent to him our Father Augustine, who was able to draw from Franco a public admission in the presence of relatives and two Jesuits that he had done wrong in leaving the Order. Franco said that he had already asked the Pope for absolution. He now asked the Order also and, as his last wish, he wanted to be buried among his confreres at St. Mary Major. He was comforted by the reassuring words of Father Augustine and he was certainly reconciled with the Order. The burial at St. Mary Major, however, did not take place, because Franco got better and lived for many more years. He died in 1625 and was buried in the College of the Jesuits in Naples.<sup>32</sup>

During the IV General Chapter (1601), Augustine was elected Superior of St. Mary Major and appointed by the new Superior General, Father Giuseppe Imparato, as Vicar General for Italy. He always discharged this responsibility with authority, prudence and, more importantly, with the example of his life.<sup>33</sup> It was also during these years that he welcomed in Naples the Spanish Discalced Carmelites by housing them at St. Mary Major and introducing them to various people who helped them to get established in the city.

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<sup>31</sup> *Passim*, C. Piselli, *Notizia Historica*, 1710, Rome, Pages 127 - 128.

It's probable that Father Augustine intended his 4<sup>th</sup> vow to apply even to offices internal to the Order. This came out into the open at the Seventh General Chapter, when Augustine invoked the vow for not accepting his election of Assistant to the General, but the Superior General, Father Manco, dispensed him from the vow and forced him to accept while the chapter was in session and witnessed the confrontation.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, Pages 53-54. Cf. also Diego de Villafranca, CRM, *Chronologia Sacra*, 1706, Madrid, Page 471

<sup>33</sup> Cf. F. G. de Palacios, *Athaeneum Minor*, Ms., 1720, chapter 15: "qui uti exemplo et prudentia mire Ordini profuit semper, ita pietate, autoritateque sua valde iubet et fovit".

Again, the IV General Chapter (October 1601), which was also held under the presidency of Augustine Caracciolo, is perhaps best remembered for initiating the process of putting together the Constitutions. Up to this time, the Order had been governed with a few simple rules and some good traditions introduced gradually and practiced by all from the beginning. In order to give to the Institute a more stable form, the Fathers at the Chapter thought of putting together an official text of all the laws. For this purpose, they agreed to divide the subject matter among themselves and then to report at a special Diet the following year to discuss and approve what they had prepared. Father Augustine, who was the oldest member of the Order and the first companion of Father Adorno, was to write of "the accomplishments and what was practiced by the Order from the beginning";<sup>34</sup> Father Alfonso Manco was to report on the formation of Novices and the spiritual exercises in our oratories; Father Andrea Albertini on the regular observance; Father Stefano Sirleto on the penances to be imposed, and Father Lorenzo D'Aponte on the curriculum of studies.

It was also during this Chapter and through the efforts of Father Augustine himself, that a practice *lodevolmente* introduced from the beginning was approved and remained as a significant component of the life of the Order in the future. Tradition has it that in St. Mary Major there was an ancient chapel dedicated to the birth of our Divine Savior. Since the first year our fathers had moved to the church, on the vigil of the Epiphany, they would go in procession to the chapel while singing the appropriate hymn of the feast. After they had all entered, they knelt and one after another made an offering of himself, or his will, or something similar to the Infant Jesus. They accompanied the offering with a personal prayer which they said aloud. The ceremony started with the Superior and after him one by one all the others would do the same. The devotion, practiced for several years, was formally accepted by the IV General Chapter of 1601 and renamed the *Renewal of the Vows on the Vigil of the Epiphany* as we know it to this day in our Ritual.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, something should be said of Father Augustine which in a way could be a summation of his life as a religious. In November 1606, he was chosen by the Vicar General in Italy, Francis Caracciolo, and sent to the religious communities in Rome to conduct a canonical visit together with Clemente Turtura as his secretary. In the letter of appointment, Francis reveals the high esteem he has for his blood relative and old collaborator in the establishment of the Order. He presents him to the religious in Rome as the *successor* of our First Father Augustine Adorno - not only for bearing his name, but because of his sanctity and fatherly care. He urges Augustine to go to his brothers, correct their errors and proclaim the truth to them with the innocence of his life. Our historian, F.G. de Palacios, who quotes the letter and transcribes it for posterity, says

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<sup>34</sup> This report known as *Memorie*, today can be found in Biblioteca Nazionale, Rome, in a Volume with other manuscripts and titled "Fondi Minori di Provenienza Claustrale", #3804. Without question, the document is rich and authoritative for the informations it provides. Having been written by the hand of one of our Founders, and because of the serious mandate he had received from the Chapter, it must be considered of primary importance in any critical discussion on the beginnings of the Order.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. D. Fiumara, Op. Cit. Book 5, Chapter II

that in this short note *we can almost see the living and most holy faces of both Augustines, Adorno's and Caracciolo's* - So much they were alike!<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Here is the text of the letter as found in Francisco Garcia de Palacios, crm., *Athaenneum Minor*, Ms., 1720:

Jesus + Maria  
Patri Augustino Caracciolo, Sacerdoti professo, Capitulari  
Clericorum Minorum, ac nostro Assistenti, salutem.  
Cum per Constitutiones ac postremum Generale Capitulum sancte mandetur, ut quottannis singulae Religionis nostrae Domus diligentissime vissitentur: proinde te, quem nos primi Patris Nostri Augustini Adorni, non tantum nominis, sed et sanctitate et paternae Charitatis successorem iure agnoscimus, et veneramur; quique innocentiae conversatione aliorum errata condemnas: ut una cum Patre Clemente Turtura, cui secretarii onus imponimus, Divi Laurentii in Lucina, ac Sanctae Agnetis in Agone, nostrarum in Urbe Domorum, visitationem quamprimum agrediaris. Hortamur in Domino, et obsecramus: ac ut commissa rite et recte exequi valeas prorsus, quam nos habemus auctotitatem, vices et voces nostras in his tibi concedimus, et impertimur: cunctisque nostris Religiosis praestent, in virtute Sanctae Obedientiae praecipimus, et mandamus.  
Datum Romae in Domo nostra divae Agnetis in Agone. Franciscus Caracciolus, Locum - tenens Patris Generalis in Italia. Die 5 Nov. 1606.

## THE TEST

Lest we think that all went well with Fabrizio, we must now open a painful page of his life. It has to do with a controversy arisen between the older and younger members of the Order concerning the *Voce Decisiva*<sup>37</sup> needed, for example, to enter and participate in the General Chapters. The *Voce* was enjoyed only by a very restricted number of priests (the First Fathers) and those to whom it had been granted after 16 years of Religious Profession. Most of the young members, who made up the Order at this time, did not have the *Voce Decisiva*. This *Voce* was given during the General Chapter. Before the election of the Superior General, the President of the Chapter was to present a list of candidates for the *Voce Decisiva*, and the election was made in the following manner: after praying to God, the Fathers would look at the merits of each one who was being recommended - the maturity, the prudence, the knowledge and the ability to do things. The Canonical Visitors, the Provincials and the Chapter attendants would speak about them openly. Those who did not receive 2/3 of the votes were declared unworthy and incapable<sup>38</sup>

This *restriction* which remitted the acquisition of the voice to decide to the judgement of one's peers was in keeping with the spirit of the Vow *non ambiendi* and in tune with the mind of Adorno who had prescribed it in the First Rule. The Novices were regularly instructed in it. Therefore, the younger members of the Order were wrong in blaming this restriction to the maneuvers of the two Caracciolos wanting to rule all the time themselves. In an age of so much clerical vanity, Adorno wanted his followers to give a clear example of evangelical humility.<sup>39</sup>

The younger members, however, did not look at the provision the same way. They alleged that the two Caracciolos, Francis and Augustine, were self-seeking and that they had even changed some of the laws in the approved Constitutions to fit their own agenda, thus excluding the younger members from the General Chapters. There arose, as a consequence, a continuous disturbance within the community and a serious scandal with Church and civil authorities to whom the religious usually turned to claim their rights.

Naturally, the two Caracciolos, Francis and Augustine, were for the continued election of those who were to have the *Voce Decisiva*. They knew that this had been the inspiration of Adorno, of whom they had been the only and strict collaborators. The younger members, however, impatient and scandalized for that restriction, felt to be acting with zeal by filing complaints and maneuvering with influential people so that they could obtain the abrogation of the printed Constitutions just approved by the Holy See. The sad situation looks even muddier if we examine the correspondences of that period. Apparently, some disgruntled members of St. Mary Major in Naples presented complaints to Cardinal Acquaviva, Prefect of the Congregation of Religious, that the two Caracciolos were seeking more and more power for themselves, had

<sup>37</sup> The *Voce Decisiva* is the right to decide. Unlike the *Voce Consultativa* which only consults, discusses and recommends, the *Voce Decisiva* votes and resolves a question one way or another.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Constitutions of 1605, #66

<sup>39</sup> Cf. D. Fiumara, *Il Primo Mezza Secolo*, Book VII, Chapter 4.

made changes of their own in the newly printed Constitutions and were arrogating the title of Founders of the Institute, which for them belonged only to the Ven. Father Augustine Adorno. Useless to say, such behavior caused deep sorrow to Francis and Augustine. Soon, the religious members in Rome – priests, brothers and even the scholastics- entered the fray. They too wrote to the Cardinal, but in defense of the Caracciolas. Here are some excerpts from one of those letters:

Most Illustrious and Reverend Cardinal Acquaviva,

The zeal for the honor of God, and the obligation of charity we must have for our Institute and for our first Fathers, who have begotten and nourished us in the Lord with their many labors and struggles, impels us to appeal to your Lordship and expose the unjust calumny which was levelled a few days ago against our First Fathers and which wrongly and falsely attacks their integrity...

There is no foundation to what has been reported against Father Francis or against Father Fabrizio, nor are there secrets that could embarrass them...In fact, these Fathers have always lived with such a purity and openness of life that their behavior has been an inspiration to all of us...

As for what pertains to the ambition of Father Francis Caracciolo...his reasons for going to Spain...and his wanting to retain all the offices of the government...this is all rash judgement and manifest lies...We know that whatever tasks Francis undertook, they were by the will and at the direction of our own Chapters...It was necessity, not ambition, that moved him to take on responsibilities...

It is a sin against charity to deny the title of Founders to these Fathers (*Francis and Fabrizio*). We know that they are. Ask Most Reverend Monsignor Pignatelli, Bishop of Aquila, and Father Giustino Barnaba of the Order of Theatins, who have first hand knowledge in this matter...

We regret very much the damage that these detractors bring upon themselves and our Institute...We pray Your Lordship to admonish them and to re-integrate them in the first love of our Institute...

Finally, may our Institute, and these our First Fathers, retain the same good name with you, the Sacred Congregation and the world that they always had in the past. There is no reason why the Institute should bear the consequences of the indiscreteness of the few...

(Signed) Hilario Gerosa, Giovanni Battista Oliva, Francesco Valletta, Basilio Fusco, Giuseppe Grassi, Paolo Masi, Stefano Farina, Anselmo D'Agostino, Silvestro Occone, Benedetto Giustiniano, Alfonso Latillo, Pietro Perugino, Bartolomeo Elefante, Marcello Micone, Benedetto Farina, Ambrosio Della Gonza, Filippo De Negris, Raffaele D'Aversa. (Biblioteca Nazionale, Rome, *Provenienza Claustrale Varia*, V (ex 3803).

With all this going on, we can understand the state of mind of Francis Caracciolo (and we can assume of Agustine Caracciolo also) as Francis writes this letter to Domenico Fiumara on September 20, 1607 on the sad and reprehensible behavior of some members of the Institute:

To Father Domenico Fiumara, Priest of the Clerics Minor,

My most beloved son,

I will always trust in your remembrance of me even though you have not been writing too often, as you can rest assured of mine when I do not write. Let us keep in mind that true love does not need these lines.

I am staying here in St. Agnes even though I go to St. Lawrence to preach on Sundays. I do it because if I do not see, I do not get upset. In fact, if you say that the house of Naples has lost the image of our religious Institute, you can believe that these (*houses in Rome*) do not even have the shadow. There is nothing left anymore. Everything has been lost. May God put a remedy to it as only He can, even if I have my doubts, as the evil is not done by the walls of the house, but by the minds.

To me it seems like a thousand years before I can be relieved of the troubles of being superior. Let us have a Chapter, because I want to attend to my salvation in a corner either in Italy or in Spain. In the end we die and when

we least expect, and I will not be asked if the Institute has increased and expanded, but if I stayed with the taste of being a good religious.

Let us hope that our Lord will not hold it against them by striking some of them. I am afraid that if God permitted that tragedy to happen to Father Sirleto, we can think it possible for others too, who exteriorly have behaved in much worse manner than he. But may the Lord have mercy on them, give them light to come to their senses, to do penance for their sins, and thus repair the damage done to our poor Institute.

If Your Reverence will not come here in Rome, but will remain in Naples, I would like you to stay at the *Masseria*, but on feastdays go back (*to St. Mary Major*) for confessions; I would also be pleased if you went to listen to the lectures of Theology etc.

I embrace you in the Lord. Remember to pray to God for me so that I may begin now to serve Him.  
Francis Caracciolo of the Clerics Minor

Rome, September 20, 1607

Thus we come to the celebration of the Seventh General Chapter - December 15, 1607 to January 11, 1608.

The members who participated were:

- 4 of the first Fathers: Augustine and Francis Caracciolo, Alfonso Manco and Andrea Albertini.
- 3 representatives of the Italian Province: Pomponio Perfetto, Hilario Gurosa and Giovanni de Ghevara.
- 3 representatives of the Spanish Province: Eugenio Hurtado, Augustine Gerardo and Giovanni Battista de Vernado.
- 8 new members by virtue of a new decree: Giovanni Battista Oliva, Francesco Valletta, Gregorio Salernitano, Basilio Fusco, Vincenzo de Rugieri, Giuseppe Grasso, Paolo de Masi and Bernardo Mottola.
- The Father General, Giuseppe Imparato, and his companion, Lawrence de Ponte, one of the First Fathers, who were in Spain, are not mentioned. Imparato, as Father General, could have appointed a representative. Nothing is said of whether he did.

The work of the Chapter was led by Father Alfonso Manco, who was elected first President of the Chapter and then Superior General. In the seating of January 1, 1608, he issued a circular letter for all the members of the Order to hand over within three days all personal effects and any document pertaining to the beginnings of the Order. All this *in virtute sanctae obedientiae and under pain of excommunication*.

Naturally, for Francis and for Augustine, the time was not enough to go through all the papers, especially to make a judgement as to what was pertinent and juridical on the beginnings of the Order. The two Caracciolos' moral authority had as a base the historical fact of their collaboration in the process of the foundation with Adorno. It was moreover, juridically consolidated by briefs, decrees, letters and other documents which they had accumulated and which they kept with themselves. There were also the sensitive findings of the canonical visits recently conducted by Francis Caracciolo in Italy. All this required time to sort out. But Father Manco, with legitimate and, as usual, shrewd maneuver was trying to get his hands on these documents for whatever reason he had in mind.

Francis and Augustine complained to the Chapter for the abrupt and abrasive directive. At the same time, they submitted a letter to the Congregation of Religious so that they would intervene and clarify for the future their intention and their role in the foundation of the Order. The letter was of the following tone:

"In word and in writing we have been accused before His Holiness, the Pope, and the Cardinals of the Congregation that we are ambitious and have usurped the title of Founders of our Congregation - while the Founder is supposedly only a certain Father Augustine Adorno. Being this a lie, which dishonors everyone in the Congregation, we implored a few months ago His Holiness to verify whether we the undersigned did found with said Father Augustine Adorno the said our Congregation.

With this we are not trying to boast of this title, or to dominate in the Congregation. On the contrary, we have taken a vow not to seek any honors or titles, nor superiority; but so that the truth be clarified for everyone, religious and civil, for the past and for the future, for the service of God and our Congregation."<sup>40</sup>

Francis Caracciolo  
Augustine Caracciolo

After a discussion of the problem and before the Holy See could resolve the matter in truth, a Brief was located and read while the Chapter was in session. The Brief, addressed to Francis Caracciolo and dated February 15, 1607, was written by Msgr. Scipio Cobellius by authority of Pope Paul V. In the Brief, the Pope grants to Augustine Caracciolo, Francis Caracciolo, Alfonso Manco, Andrea Albertini, Giuseppe Imparato and Lorenzo de Ponte the privilege of entering all the Chapters with the *Voce Decisiva* as well as qualifying them as the "praedictae Congregationis Clericorum Regularium Minorum primi Fundatores adhuc superstites". Here are some excerpts of the Brief:

Nos ex certa scientia et matura deliberatione...concedimus et indulgemus ut dilecti filii Augustinus Caracciolus, Franciscus Caracciolus, Alphonsus Mancus, Andreas Albertinus, Josephus Imparatus et Laurentius de Ponte supradictae Congregationis Clericorum Regularium Minorum primi fundatores, adhuc superstites, omnibus Capitulis generalibus, provincialibus et localibus eiusdem Congregationis interesse, ac in eis votum consultivum, et decisivum habere possint...decernentes illos super hoc a quoque quavis auctoritate impediri molestari, vel perturbari posse, etc. (Ms. VII General Chapter, Jan. 10, 1608 seating).

The writer of the Brief unfortunately used the word *fundatores*, but the Brief has nothing to do with the foundation of the Order which had happened some 20 years before. The Brief had been requested only last February by Francis himself, who wanted the *First Fathers* to be regarded always with honor and deference in the Order. They had been the first candidates who came to join the Founders and in them is to be found the original spirit of the Institute. Francis, however, never meant for them to be considered *Founders* in the strict sense. Most of them, in fact, had been his novices. This notwithstanding, the Brief was taken by the younger members of the Order as a definition *ex cathedra* and used for their own advantage. They would not dispute or

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Acts of the General Chapter, 1607/8, Seating of January 10.

reject what the Pope had declared *ex certa scientia*. If anyone was not happy, he should have recourse to the Pope and have him issue another Brief to the contrary.<sup>41</sup>

After these events, and especially because the title of *Founders of the Order* had been diluted and falsified, the Caracciolos could have reacted forcefully within their own Institute and could have appealed to Church authorities for vindication and truth. This time, however, they chose silence. They allowed this passive purification to take place in them. We are reminded of Christ, who remained silent when impostors brought false accusations against Him (Mark 14:53-65).

The facts here mentioned help us to better appreciate Francis and Augustine Caracciolo's holiness. The Vow *non ambiendi*, which they had professed and which they had always taught to the novices, was seriously tested. Their sense of restraint was heroic. Their abandonment to the will of God reveals not only that they had meditated upon the passion of Christ, but that they had assimilated it and lived it everyday. It is the leap of faith of *not my will but yours be done*, so often seen in the lives of the saints.

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<sup>41</sup> This matter has been extensively treated by Father Gabriel Lucarelli, CRM, in an article entitled *La Questione dei Primi Padri, 1593-1608* and distributed internally to the members of the Order. There are plenty of copies still around.

## THE LAST YEARS

As painful as the experience of the VII General Chapter had been, it did not lead our Founders to revenge nor to aloofness. At the Chapter, Augustine had been elected First Assistant to the Father General, in spite of his reluctance to accept, because of a vow he had made. After the Chapter, he went to work earnestly, redoubling his efforts for the good of his beloved Congregation. This was especially so when his companion and collaborator in the foundation, Francis Caracciolo, died in Agnone on June 4, 1608.<sup>42</sup>

After the death of Francis Caracciolo, Augustine continued to guide and to influence the Order with wisdom and firmness. He participated in the formulation of the new Constitutions, which were approved by the 8th General Diet of the Order in 1610. Afterward, he was entrusted to present them to the Holy See, together with Father Vincenzo de Ruggieri, the General Procurator, and Father Paul Masio, the principal redactor.<sup>43</sup> These Constitutions, printed in 1678, remained in force for over 300 years in the Order.

At the 9<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, 1613, Augustine was elected General Procurator - the man who deals officially with the Holy See for the affairs of the Order. For this reason, he remained in Rome and gave all his attention to promote the good of the Order and its expansion. This was certainly true in the foundation of *Santa Fede* in Genoa. After six years of attempts and setbacks by Father Giovanni Guevara, Bartolomeo Infante and Adorno Tortora, a church was finally offered to Augustine Caracciolo by a Knight of Malta, Annibale Minale. This Gentleman, having heard the strong wish of the Order to have a House in the birthplace of their First Father, Augustine Adorno, actually offered two churches which he had *in commendam* - the Church of St. John and the parish Church of Santa Fede. Augustine Caracciolo took Santa Fede because of its better location. No difficulties were encountered for the transferring of the title, nor in procuring a nearby house for residence and other needs. The place was opened right away, November 10, 1613 by Father Adorno Tortora and a lay brother, Damiano Cicogna, but the following year the Order sent there three outstanding religious - Father Gabriel Lyra, renowned preacher, as well as Fathers Girolamo Francone and Marcello Micone, both proven Lectors, who in a short time were able to attract the attention and admiration of large audiences and the high nobility of Genova. The foundation received its final stamp of approval when the newly elected Father General, Joseph Imparato, stopped there on his way back to Italy from Spain.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, Agustine was busy in expanding and giving the final touches to the Congregation considered and loved as his own daughter, when illness struck him. It was a bronchial infection, painful as it was serious and stubborn. It lasted a whole year, in which Augustine, like the Job of Old, expressed the goodness of God over the miseries of life. Sometimes there were signs of

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Letter of Francis Caracciolo to the Superior General, Alfonso Manco, written two days before he died. It is interesting how in this letter of final farewell, he recommends "in particular to Augustine Caracciolo to favor this foundation" in Agnone. Till the very end, we see the unity and the deference of Francis for Augustine in regard to foundations.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. C. Piselli, *Notizia Historica*, Page 104

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem page 114

improvement, which raised the hopes for a slow recovery, but Augustine, guided by internal intuition from God, said without hesitation that he would die soon. Accordingly, he begged his fellow religious not to speak to him but of heavenly things, and, to get himself ready for the journey there, he asked for the last Sacraments. He received them with such tenderness and devotion as to leave no doubt about a soul in love with God.

The common belief that he was a holy man moved several Cardinals to come and visit him before he died. Among these was Cardinal Ginnasio to whom Augustine recommended the protection of and the special regard for his Congregation. He showed to the very end his tender and deep love for his own, imitating thus our Redeemer Himself who *cum dilexisset suos in finem dilexit eos* (John 13:1).

Well aware, then, that Christ was calling him on the day of His Ascension, the morning of that Solemnity he requested the Superior of the house to expose the Blessed Sacrament and have the religious pray so that he would have a happy journey to the life beyond. Finally, with unusual joy and eyes turned heavenward, he began a soft conversation with his Lord which moved to tears those who were around his bedside. He continued in this way till Vespers, when he rendered his blameless spirit to his Creator in the house of San Lorenzo in Lucina on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 1615 at the age of sixty.

Many historians have praised Augustine Caracciolo for having been chosen by God to be one of the three Colleagues who gave to the Church a new religious Order. I have chosen this Latin epigraph, written by his fellow religious and placed by his tomb, as a fitting closure to his life:

Hospes non te hic humana praepediunt,  
Sed Coelestia contemplare  
Ager iste, non vermes nutrit, sed Thesaurum abscondit.  
Terra vena divite non sterilis redditur: Immo hisce floribus exornatur.  
Asperioris vitae Cultus mundiales divitias despicit.  
Admodum effloret humilitas sine limite efferbet charitas  
Episcopaliū Dignitatum urget contemptus  
Religiosae observantiae viror repuerascit  
Ecquisnam cultor.  
V. P. Augustinus Caracciolus C. R. M.  
Tercius Religionis Fundator.  
Sacer olor, qui mortem cecinit, ad futuram  
Triunfator saeculi coelestia scandit  
Eo die, quo Christus Dominus mortis mors,  
Peccatiū destructor, Coelos ascendit.  
Die 28. Maij anni reparationis humanae 1615, Aetatis suae 60.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> As reported by Diego de Villafranca, CRM., in *Chronologia Sacra*, Madrid, 1706, page 497. Notice that the epigraph gives the day of death on the 28th day of May rather than the 25th – a challenge for future historians to reconcile the divergence.

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